United Nations A/59/253

General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 September 2004

Original: English

Fifty-ninth session
Agenda items 114 and 118

Human resources management

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Impact of the human resources management reform

Note by the Secretary-General*

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, 54/244 of 23 December 1999 and 57/305 of 15 April 2003, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit, for the attention of the General Assembly, the attached report, conveyed to him by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, on the impact of human resources management reform.

2. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

* The delay in submission was caused by intensive consultations with the Office of Human Resources Management.

04-45729 (E) 211004

Summary

At the request of the General Assembly, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluated the impact of human resources management reform. The present report addresses the impact of the new staff selection system, including central review bodies, mobility, performance management, career support and training and human resources planning.

OIOS recognizes that the full impact of certain initiatives evaluated in the current report will be realized only in the long term. In such cases, the OIOS analysis serves as baseline data that will enable the Office of Human Resources Management to gauge future progress towards desired outcomes. The OIOS recommendations are designed to bridge the gap between the current accomplishments of the Office of Human Resources Management and the realization of each objective set forth in the Secretary-General's programme of human resources management reform.

Human resources management reform has achieved significant success to date, including a decrease in the number of days to fill a vacancy and a sharp increase in organizational focus on creating opportunities for staff mobility and career development. The Office of Human Resources Management has also identified a strategic direction and developed corresponding reform initiatives. Authority for recruitment decisions now resides at the appropriate level of the Organization.

However, the potential impact of human resources management reform is not yet fully realized. Though the Office of Human Resources Management initiatives have begun a cultural change, staff and managers are not fully committed to the nature, scope and purpose of reform. As a result, there is inconsistent prioritization of responsibilities and accountability for people management. The Office of Human Resources Management should immediately and effectively address this lack of confidence in reform initiatives. An organizational focus on effective performance management and strategic planning, rather than compliance, would enhance the ultimate success of the Office's integrated policy framework. The Office must also improve its ability systematically to measure and monitor human resources indicators.

The new staff selection system has significantly enhanced opportunities to apply and enlarge the pool of applicants. However, neither the quality of candidates nor career prospects for junior staff have improved. Although central review bodies have assertively exercised their function, their effectiveness is diminished by a lack of information relevant to reviewing evaluations and proposals. The new mobility policy has yet to result in reduced vacancy rates at duty stations with chronic vacancy issues. The organizational culture needs to shift from a compliance perspective to promulgating mobility strategies that satisfy operational requirements and benefit staff careers.

The recommendations in the present report include specific suggestions designed to build upon the policies, tools and infrastructure currently in place. In addition to proposals for shortening the recruitment process, developing proactive recruiting strategies, increasing capacity to assess operational needs and tracking indicators at the department/office and individual levels, OIOS suggests steps to increase staff and manager commitment to the most challenging aspects of reform: mobility and performance management.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–2	4
II.	Methodology	3–4	4
III.	Findings and observations	5–90	4
	A. Staff selection system	5–29	4
	B. Central review bodies	30–41	9
	C. Mobility	42–57	12
	D. Performance management	58–69	15
	E. Career support and staff development	70–81	18
	F. Human resources planning	82–90	21
IV.	Recommendations	91–130	23

I. Introduction

1. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/305 of 15 April 2003, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a study on the impact of human resources management reform, particularly reviewing improvements in staff selection and training, including an assessment of central review bodies and mobility. OIOS also evaluated career support, human resources planning and performance management initiatives to provide a comprehensive picture of reform, as well as to address areas that were not fully explored in its previous report on the issue (A/57/726). The present report was reviewed by the Department of Management and its comments are reflected herein.

2. Human resources management reform has been pursued vigorously over the past 10 years (see A/C.5/49/5, A/53/414 and A/55/253). After endorsement by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/258, implementation of the new staff selection system in May 2002 propelled the reform forward rapidly. OIOS recognizes that the impact of some initiatives evaluated in the current report will be realized only in the long term. In such cases, OIOS analysis serves as baseline data that will enable the Office of Human Resources Management to gauge future progress towards desired outcomes.

II. Methodology

3. The study included document reviews, analysis of Galaxy and Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) data, interviews and focus groups at Headquarters and in the field,[1] web-based surveys to Heads of Department, Executive Officers, managers and staff, and human resources benchmarking. Other oversight studies, relevant assessments and reports were taken into account.[2] Owing to an ongoing audit of the Galaxy system, a comprehensive survey of members of the Senior Management Group analysed by the Office of Human Resources Management and a series of modifications and enhancements to improve usability of the system, OIOS decided not to focus on the Galaxy e-staffing system in the present report.

4. The structure of the present report mirrors the methodology OIOS employed to evaluate the impact of human resources management reform. In each focus area, OIOS assessed the measurable impact and progress of initiatives linked to key reform objectives and identified implementation challenges. Recommendations to address implementation challenges and increase the Organization's ability to achieve human resources management reform goals are provided at the end of the report.

III. Findings and observations

A. Staff selection system

1. Progress and impact of the new staff selection system

5. The new staff selection system has brought significant improvements to the recruitment and promotion of staff members. Its most notable achievements include:

- Delegation of the selection decision to the appropriate level in the Organization. Managers are able to select their staff while the process is monitored by review bodies
- Greater opportunities and flexibility for applicants. Vacancy information is easily accessible, the application process simplified and time-in-grade requirements streamlined
- Focus on competencies. Managers can now focus on the appropriate competencies for the job, rather than exclusively considering formal qualifications and experience of candidates
- Standardized system of job classification. Generic job profiles provide accessible descriptions of job characteristics and requirements
- Reduction of recruitment time. The web-based application and selection system, Galaxy, contributes to a shorter and more transparent recruitment process.

6. Since it is an entirely new approach with particular shortcomings, the new staff selection system has not yet fully demonstrated its expected impact. Staff, managers and human resources personnel are still learning to navigate the new process and effectively use its web-based tool, Galaxy. At the same time, the Office of Human Resources Management is refining relevant policies and implementing improvements to the Galaxy e-staffing system.

Attracting and selecting candidates

7. The current process of advertising vacancies has increased the pool of applicants significantly. However, it has resulted primarily in a quantitative increase rather than a qualitative improvement in candidates. Having such a large number of unqualified applicants screened by human resources officers, managers and members of review bodies is inefficient, unnecessarily increases staff workloads and creates delays. It also results in time spent simply searching for qualified candidates instead of evaluating them.

8. A roster of previously short-listed applicants facilitates development of a pool of qualified candidates. Although such a roster exists, it has not been consistently available for recruitment purposes. In addition, occupational networks, which would also circulate information about qualified internal candidates, have not yet evolved beyond the discussion stage. OIOS finds that the current process for advertising posts, the absence of standardized roster management in Galaxy and the delay in establishing occupational networks have reduced the effectiveness of the new staff selection system.

9. Applying behavioural interview techniques,[3] such as competency-based interviewing, using panels with a minimum number of interviewers or sequential interviews with different interviewers, interviewing a minimum number of applicants (when practicable) and documenting evaluations in a standardized format would enhance the quality of selected candidates.

10. Competency-based interviewing is recognized by managers as a highly valuable evaluation tool. Nonetheless, the OIOS review revealed that a significant percentage of interview notes do not reflect use of a competency-based method. Interview notes are often either extremely brief or exclusively focused on

knowledge and work history instead of demonstrated skills and competencies. Based on information in Galaxy, OIOS cannot conclude that competency-based interviewing has been established consistently as an evaluation technique. OIOS analysis also revealed that in over a third of reviewed selection cases, interview panels consisted of only one or two members and only one or two candidates were interviewed despite there being an average of 114 eligible applicants per vacancy. These findings indicate that key requirements regarding the interview process, content and documentation have not been consistently established.

Geographical and gender representation

11. OIOS reviewed data on appointments to posts subject to geographical distribution.[4] Except for a downward trend in unrepresented Member States, no significant or consistent trends were detectable. OIOS therefore concludes that the new staff selection system has had no steady impact on representation levels at the Secretariat. Similarly, no distinct trend in appointments or promotions of women across different levels and categories since May 2002 was revealed.[5]

Career development opportunities

12. By calculating the ratio of vacancies filled by external vs. internal candidates, OIOS assessed the impact of the new staff selection system on career opportunities for staff. The data indicates a slight increase in the percentage of vacancies filled by internal candidates: from 70 per cent to 74 per cent from January 2001 to December 2003. The percentage of P-2 staff promoted annually to the P-3 level decreased steadily between 1998 and 2003, from about 18 per cent to 12 per cent. In 2003, the percentage of staff at the P-2 level promoted to P-3 was relatively small compared to the percentage promoted from P-3 to P-4. Given that rejuvenation of the Organization is a goal of human resources management reform, there is a need for more effective initiatives to improve career opportunities for junior Professionals.

13. Though P-3-level vacancies should provide promotion opportunities primarily for staff appointed to the P-2 level through national competitive or "G to P" examinations, they are utilized as promotion opportunities for many categories of staff. In a sample of applications documented in Galaxy, OIOS observed that nearly two thirds of selected external applicants for P-3 vacancies had prior experience with the United Nations system, primarily on short-term contracts, in technical assistance projects or in the General Service category — often in the same department/office that advertised the vacant posts.

14. In order for staff to leverage fully the opportunities provided by the new staff selection system, they must have a clear understanding of the related instructions and provisions. However, as the OIOS survey indicates, many staff members are unclear about key elements of the new system, such as eligibility criteria. Moreover, the significant percentage of internal candidates who apply after the 30-day mark indicates that many are not aware of the opportunity to be considered before the 60-day deadline and therefore fail to be among the first candidates reviewed by managers.

Accountability within the new selection system[6]

15. The new staff selection system has introduced a key element of accountability to recruitment in the Organization: selection decisions are now clearly assigned to

Heads of Departments/Offices. OIOS supports this policy and believes that these decisions must be linked to consequences and outcomes if accountability is to be meaningful. OIOS was unable to identify how such consequences and outcomes are currently attached to selection decisions at various levels within the Organization.

16. The main tools to ensure accountability at the programme level include results-based budgeting and reporting, which hold managers accountable for delivering substantive programme results. Given that expected results can only be achieved when capable staff are in place, people management is crucial to the results-based accountability framework. Although results-based budgeting has become standard procedure, "it is equally true that the degree of acceptance and ownership of this new concept and its mastery varied significantly between departments and offices".[7]

17. Other tools to hold Heads of Department accountable for specific human resources objectives are Human Resources Action Plans, jointly agreed upon by Heads of Department and the Office of Human Resources Management,[8] and Programme Management Plans, which are discussed by the Secretary-General and the Heads of Department. Programme Management Plans have particular significance in establishing direct accountability at the most senior levels of the Organization.

18. The performance appraisal system (PAS) is the Organization's main tool for holding line managers accountable. Managerial competencies are included in the e-PAS four-point assessment of staff with supervisory responsibilities, but items directly relating to recruitment are not included. Furthermore, comments on managerial competencies are only required when designated "outstanding" or "unsatisfactory". The e-PAS does not prompt reporting officers to provide detailed comments on the managerial performance of supervisors or on their human resources management skills.

Recruitment timeline

19. Though it has only been in place since May 2002, the new recruiting system has significantly shortened the time to fill vacancies from 275 days in 1999 to an average of about 174 days.[9] The time to fill vacancies differs significantly across departments, from 104 to 328 days. The variance between departments indicates that delays in the selection process are also linked to the rigour with which departments/offices pursue individual cases.

2. Challenges to the success of the new staff selection system

Integrating recruitment and mobility

20. One key challenge for the Organization is to establish a selection approach that encourages mobility while achieving the optimal match between people and jobs. The conflict between narrow recruitment preferences of managers and the mobility requirement negatively affects junior positions. Overly specific vacancy announcements and a manager's desire to employ a "specialist" make it difficult for junior Professionals to move across functions, especially at the P-3 level.

Attracting and selecting qualified candidates

21. The Organization's ability to attract and select qualified candidates is primarily challenged by:

- Lack of strategic job advertising
- Inefficient application screening
- Lack of universal evaluation standards.

22. Advertising posts primarily involves issuing vacancy announcements on Galaxy. Targeting candidates through specific recruitment channels, such as professional associations, specific web sites, or journals, is practised on a very limited basis. While the Organization has no consistent mechanism actively to "pull" external candidates into the Organization, the personal history profile passively "pulls" applicants in for as many vacancies as they wish to apply. Furthermore, instead of publishing vacancy announcements after a post becomes vacant, departments/offices could employ proactive recruitment methods, such as defining the desired candidate profile and identifying specific recruitment sources and channels (within and outside the Organization) well in advance of a vacancy.

23. Clear, consistent vacancy announcements are also essential to ensuring that appropriate candidates apply. Vacancies for similar posts at the same level exhibit variances owing to inconsistent utilization of generic job profiles, vague language, as well as programme-specific preferences for formal requirements. Vacancy announcements often contain extremely detailed lists of substantive functions which may be incomprehensible to most external applicants.

24. Inefficiencies in current application screening occur when there is a lack of communication between managers and Human Resources Case Officers regarding screening criteria. Often, the Office of Human Resources Management, managers and central review bodies each screen the same extensive lists of candidates. Reviewing large numbers of applications in Galaxy is particularly cumbersome for managers and central review bodies.

25. Variance in how evaluations are conducted and documented is related to a lack of standards at the organizational level. Although managers are supported in navigating the selection process and conducting competency-based interviews, standards for the interview process and documentation do not exist organization-wide. Furthermore, no guidelines are provided for utilizing the scoring tool in Galaxy. Managers' ability to assess candidates effectively is further challenged by the fact that e-PAS files are often not attached to internal applications.

Establishing accountability for people management

26. Establishing accountability for recruitment decisions is primarily dependent on the thorough implementation and acceptance of results-based management. Accountability should also be based on clearly assigned responsibilities, follow-up mechanisms at various levels of the Organization and ownership of people management responsibilities. Such measures are not consistently applied, however. Human resources management is not systematically incorporated into senior staff meetings in all departments/offices, although this is of vital importance to developing the degree of ownership and responsibility that is devoted to the preparation of programme budgets.

27. The accuracy and consistency of human resources data represent another challenge to accountability. Data used to track human resources management indicators is often inconsistent, making it difficult for the Office of Human Resources Management to develop benchmarks and strategies to assess progress. Furthermore, some of the documentation regarding the selection process is not centrally recorded in Galaxy, but only available in written, printed or electronic format outside the system. Storing document records in multiple locations reduces the monitoring capability required to ensure accountability.

Shortening the recruitment timeline

28. The vacancy creation and selection processes are not currently bound by specific deadlines. Moreover, participants in the process do not receive reminders that they have not fulfilled a required step.

29. Vacancies are advertised for 60 days. OIOS analysis of Galaxy data revealed that applications peak at three points after a vacancy is posted:

- Within the first week
- Immediately before the day on which candidates are ruled eligible to be considered
- On the 59th and 60th days after the vacancy is posted.

Over 83 per cent of all 15- and 30-day candidates and 76 per cent of all 60-day candidates apply either in the first 45 days or just before the deadline. OIOS concludes therefore that the 60-day advertising period could be reduced by 15 days without significantly diminishing opportunities for candidates to apply.

B. Central review bodies

1. Progress and impact of central review bodies

30. OIOS found no case in which a candidate was selected who did not qualify for a position based upon pre-approved evaluation criteria. The fact that central review bodies have been systematically engaging Programme Case Officers in modifying evaluation criteria and reviewing lists of recommended candidates demonstrates that they effectively fulfil their key responsibilities. This also affirms the premise of the new staff selection system: authority for selection decisions is appropriately assigned to Heads of Department and the role of central review bodies does not include designating the "most suitable" candidate for a vacant post.

31. According to the policy outlined in the Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2002/6), OIOS believes that designated functions of central review bodies constitute an appropriate system of checks and balances. In practice, however, system implementation at times limits the ability of central review bodies to "check" the power of managers and Heads of Department, respectively, as outlined below.

Review patterns of central review bodies

32. Detailed analysis of the activity of central review bodies from May 2002 to May 2004 reveals the following:

- Central review bodies return a significantly higher number of evaluation criteria than proposals for recommended candidates
- Central review bodies at Headquarters return a higher number of evaluation criteria and proposals for recommended candidates than central review bodies at duty stations away from Headquarters
- At Headquarters and duty stations away from Headquarters, the strong impact of Central Review Boards and Central Review Committees is evidenced by the relatively high volume of cases returned to departments/offices as compared to Central Review Panels[10]
- A decrease in returned cases from 2002 to 2003 reflects improvement in managers' ability to develop evaluation criteria and prepare lists of proposed candidates for central review bodies
- From May 2002 to December 2003, central review bodies referred only one case to the Secretary-General for decision.

Perceptions of central review body members

33. Approximately half the respondents to an Office of Human Resources Management survey of members of central review bodies consider their role in reviewing and approving evaluation criteria to be important; they also believe that they contribute to the transparency and fairness of the selection process. However, only 37 per cent of respondents consider their role in approving lists of candidates to be important, while 43 per cent believe that list approval contributes to the overall transparency and fairness of the selection process. Differences in the perception of effectiveness regarding review of evaluation criteria and submission of recommended candidates were also corroborated in interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, members of central review bodies who served on the previous appointment and promotion bodies often disagree in general with their new role; they do not accept the basic premise of the new staff selection system, which entrusts programme managers with the final decision to select a candidate.

2. Challenges to the success of central review bodies

34. The effectiveness of central review bodies is affected by three main issues:

- Inconsistencies in functions carried out by different central review bodies
- Lack of access to information relevant to reviewing evaluations and proposals
- Lack of uniformity in key aspects of the evaluation process.

Encouraging more consistency in the functions of central review bodies

35. Owing to the absence of centrally provided guidelines on the operation of central review bodies, different central review bodies at the same duty station and central review bodies at different duty stations define their functions individually. For example, the pool of candidates to be considered by central review bodies under section 5.2 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2002/6 is not uniformly defined. Some consider it their responsibility to review all applicants ruled eligible at the 15- or 30-day mark, while others include all female candidates or, in some cases, every

candidate submitted for the position. This creates inconsistencies in evaluation and challenges the premise of equal treatment for all candidates.

36. According to the new selection system, managers do not have an obligation to interview all qualified candidates. Central review body members reported cases in which central review bodies, owing to personal knowledge of specific applications, highlighted them for further review by managers. This practice constitutes a challenge to the principle of equal and fair treatment because all candidates are not in a position to inform members of central review bodies about their application for a vacancy.

Reviewing criteria for the evaluation of candidates

37. Central review bodies assess evaluation criteria by comparing them to original vacancy announcements, which are based on generic job profiles approved by the Office of Human Resources Management. Generic job profiles have limitations, however, including inconsistent wording and requirements. Central review bodies cannot address these limitations within the scope of their role, thereby limiting the ability to ensure that evaluation criteria reflect appropriate standards.

38. Galaxy allows managers to formulate up to six questions to support Human Resource Case Officers in screening applicants for the list of recommended candidates. Central review bodies do not have access to these questions or the answers provided by candidates. Without access to these questions, central review bodies are unable to verify that evaluation criteria used to screen applicants are objective and related to the functions of the post.

Reviewing proposals for a vacancy

39. Central review bodies do not have consistent access to information relevant to fulfilling their function. For example, when evaluations documented in Galaxy do not contain interview results, central review bodies have limited information with which to determine if proposals made by managers were objective, especially with regard to competencies tested during interviews.

Composition of central review bodies

40. Because of concerns over the role of staff representatives, as defined in the terms of reference of the central review bodies, staff representative bodies at several duty stations did not nominate central review body members for the coming term.[11] This decision significantly affects the composition of central review bodies since members selected by staff (3 out of 7 members) are no longer participating; nonetheless, central review bodies continue to discharge their functions.[12] OIOS was not able to assess how this decision impacts the quality of work of the central review bodies. It is important to note that members of central review bodies indicated that they do not strictly consider themselves representatives of staff or management, but as individual members carrying out a designated function within the central review body. In fact, members selected by the staff representative body often have managerial responsibilities. The current nomination procedures therefore may introduce an artificial division among central review body members.

Conversion of staff to permanent appointment

41. According to section 5.7 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2002/6, the function of Central Review Committees is to review staff members for conversion to permanent appointment after a probationary period. The purpose of their review is "to ensure that the staff members concerned have fully demonstrated their suitability as international civil servants". Members of the Central Review Committee reported that they do not have a clear understanding of their role, especially since they are not consistently provided with the performance appraisals (PAS) of candidates. This ambiguity challenges the Committees' effectiveness in fulfilling their duties.

C. Mobility

1. Progress and impact of the mobility policy

42. The new mobility policy, which establishes mobility as a routine feature of careers at the United Nations, represents a remarkable change for an Organization that has historically relied on ad hoc, voluntary staff movement. Integration of the staff selection system and mobility policy represents an important step towards implementing an open market approach to matching staff skills with organizational needs. The new policy also responds to the need for professional development opportunities. Success of the managed reassignment exercises for junior Professionals suggests that staff are willing to change posts, functions and geographical location when support mechanisms are in place.

Reducing chronically high vacancy rates

43. The new mobility policy explicitly seeks to address chronic vacancy issues. However, vacancy rates for regular and extrabudgetary posts in the Professional categories and higher at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the United Nations Office at Nairobi indicate no specific downward trend for the period December 2000 to August 2003. The fluctuation of vacancy rates suggests that, to date, the mobility incentive has had no consistent, measurable impact on the three duty stations with chronically high vacancy rates. However, it may be too early for the mobility policy to have impacted vacancy rates significantly.

44. The issue of chronic vacancies is more significant for posts at the P-2 level. For example, approximately 26 per cent of all regular budget posts at the P-2 level are reported vacant in ECA. Current reassignment programmes did not affect this issue. In fact, one third of all lateral moves by P-2 staff participating in the reassignment programme occurred within their respective departments/offices and did not involve geographical moves. Furthermore, the number of junior Professionals assigned to difficult duty stations, such as ECA, remains low. Moreover, managers believe that the two-year period during which junior Professionals are eligible for a reassignment exercise should be extended.

Transfer and promotion patterns within and across duty stations

45. Since the introduction of the new mobility policy, the percentage of staff moving between the main duty stations decreased from 1.6 per cent in 2002 to 1.4 per cent in 2003.[13] The largest proportion of movements is accounted for by

transfers or promotions within a department/office. About 7 per cent of staff in the Professional and Director categories moved annually between departments within a duty station, while only 1.4 per cent transferred between duty stations annually from 1998 to 2003.

46. Further breakdown of geographical mobility patterns from 1998 to 2003 indicates that duty stations fall into three categories:

- *Net receiver duty stations*. Geneva is the only duty station in this group, which receives more staff and loses fewer staff than any other as a result of geographical mobility
- *Net neutral duty stations*. Vienna, New York and Beirut are locations that achieve a balance between receiving and supplying staff through geographical mobility
- *Net supplier duty stations*. With considerable variations, the regional commissions in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Santiago and Nairobi have more staff transferring out of the duty stations than staff transferring into them.

Expected progress in transfers and promotions by 2007

47. OIOS has projected mobility trends until the end of 2007.[14] Assuming transfers will increase as the 2007 deadline approaches, an annual growth rate of 10 per cent for transfers was used. According to this analysis, 51 per cent of staff members in the Professional and Director categories will be promoted or transferred from 2003 to 2007. OIOS projects that with the inclusion of estimated lateral moves, approximately 37 per cent of staff members will have reached maximum post occupancy by the end of 2007.

48. OIOS estimates further indicate that staff in General Service categories 5 to 7 are two to three times less mobile than staff in Professional and Director categories. The number of staff in those categories that will reach maximum post occupancy by 2007 will therefore be significantly higher than the projections for the Professional and Director categories.

Career development opportunities

49. Knowledge of the new policy is critical to leveraging its opportunities. However, the majority of staff are not familiar with key aspects of the mobility policy and demonstrate a high degree of confusion about the 2007 deadline, as well as how they will be placed in suitable positions after their post occupancy limits expire. Many staff members also believe that their current position should be exempt from the mobility requirement because of specialized technical skills; however, no departments/offices have officially requested exemptions from the Office of Human Resources Management. *The Department of Management replied that "a Secretariat-wide information campaign on the implementation of the mobility policy will begin in the last quarter of 2004".*

50. Despite pervasive deficiencies in staff knowledge and understanding of the new mobility policy, many view the concept of mobility positively. Main concerns focus on geographical mobility issues: spousal employment; opportunities for career development at duty stations with high vacancy rates; lack of relevant incentives for geographical mobility; and security in the field. OIOS believes that these concerns

need to be addressed immediately and effectively, otherwise efforts to increase mobility, especially at duty stations with high vacancy rates, will have minimal positive impact.

51. OIOS found that mobility is not consistently mentioned as an asset in vacancy announcements or in candidate evaluations. Therefore, mobility has not yet been established as a key element of placement and promotion decisions within departments/offices.

2. Challenges to the success of the mobility policy

Culture change and planning

52. The key to successful implementation of the mobility policy is changing individual behaviour and engendering a cultural shift across the Organization. Many departments/offices, staff and managers view the mobility policy primarily from a compliance perspective instead of focusing on how it could benefit their needs and careers. Given prior organizational mobility patterns, there is an urgent need for a well-defined strategy and communication campaign to drive adoption of the mobility requirement. The campaign should include:

(a) Open discussion and engagement with staff and managers about the value and individual challenges of mobility;

(b) Clear explanation of the forthcoming mechanisms to facilitate and enforce mobility;

(c) Quantifiable objectives that identify the type and volume of staff movement consistent with the new policy;

(d) Action plans with timelines and benchmarks to facilitate desired mobility patterns;

(e) Metrics that continuously measure changes in mobility patterns and organizational outcomes.

53. During 2002 and 2003, the Office of Human Resources Management launched several programmes to prepare staff for mobility. It developed a broad vision of the process to achieve mobility in the Organization; moreover, it plans to launch several initiatives before the mobility requirement takes effect in 2007. Notably, an information campaign and voluntary management reassignment exercises are planned. Furthermore, a process for implementing the mobility requirement has been outlined and is projected to begin in May 2007. OIOS believes that these laudable measures should be part of a strategic plan which encompasses all elements listed in paragraph 52 above.

One mobility policy, various contract types

54. Contract types vary widely across the Organization, including the length of contracts, type of funding, nature of service and applicable Staff Rules. As a consequence, some staff are excluded from the mobility policy on the basis of their appointment under different Staff Rules, while others with different contractual arrangements and career expectations are subject to the same maximum post occupancy limit. The Organization adopted a broad definition of mobility. The Office of Human Resources Management needs to monitor closely whether such a

definition ultimately serves the needs of the Organization, as well as the development needs of individual staff members.[15]

Defining organizational needs and availability of skills

55. The ultimate objective of mobility is to enable the Organization to fulfil its operational requirements. OIOS observed that a rigorous and detailed assessment of the Organization's operational needs regarding mobility has not yet taken place. OIOS believes that it is essential to analyse the kind of skills and competencies needed to support programmes at specific times. Moreover, a skills inventory, which would track the type and location of available skills, has yet to be completed. Both shortcomings limit the Organization's ability to define clearly how mobility meets operational requirements and to plan accordingly.

Preserving institutional knowledge and enhancing local initiatives

56. Mechanisms to preserve institutional knowledge must be in place to ensure that staff mobility is acceptable to managers and beneficial to the Organization. Such mechanisms are inconsistently available at the programme and subprogramme levels.[16] Effective means to preserve institutional knowledge are critical to successful implementation of the mobility policy.

57. Most mechanisms currently available to affect mobility, such as reassignment programmes or the staff selection system, are resource intensive and operate on an organization-wide scale. Multiple, flexible mobility mechanisms are needed locally to facilitate administratively efficient, financially viable job exchange exercises. Best practices to support departments/offices in encouraging mobility, such as local rotation programmes, should be disseminated whenever beneficial for the Organization.

D. Performance management

1. Impact and progress of the performance appraisal system

58. The current performance appraisal system (PAS), outlined in administrative instruction ST/AI/2002/3, is primarily a revision of a system first introduced to the Organization in 1995. The most notable improvements over the previous system are the inclusion of competencies, career aspirations and multiple perspectives, as well as an emphasis on linking individual work plans with department work plans. Beginning in April 2002, an electronic system (e-PAS) was made available online.

59. The Office of Human Resources Management was successful in achieving a PAS implementation rate of 81 per cent during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 cycles. Staff and managers consider the PAS process to be a useful mechanism for developing individual work plans and setting performance expectations and learning goals. However, the PAS process, and especially e-PAS ratings themselves, are often perceived as a compliance exercise rather than a method for managing performance or a means to reward excellent performance and address underperformance effectively.

60. The number of staff receiving the top e-PAS rating of 1 has decreased to less than 10 per cent since 2000, yet the percentage of individuals receiving ratings at the opposite end of the spectrum has not changed. While an average of 1.3 per cent

of staff received ratings of 4 or 5 from 2001 to 2003, external benchmarks indicate that up to 20 per cent of staff may not meet or only partially meet performance expectations.[17] The small number of low performance ratings reflect an organizational tendency to administer positive ratings to staff. Managers also report that they generally refrain from giving underperformers low ratings in order to avoid the rebuttal process.

61. The Office of Human Resources Management is in the process of developing an e-PAS reporting system that will move beyond compliance verification to monitor the completion of e-PAS sections by staff and supervisors.[18] This monitoring function will enable the Office of Human Resources Management to assess qualitatively how well e-PAS serves as a performance management tool. The monitoring function will also enable the Office to determine if it has effectively created opportunities for career development and promoted manager accountability for developing the careers of their staff.

2. Challenges to success of the performance appraisal system

Strengthening performance orientation and management

62. The key challenge to effective application of the PAS process is developing an organizational culture that would enable true performance management. OIOS focus groups revealed that managers are not committed to true performance orientation since they believe organizational culture dictates that they cannot differentiate staff according to performance. They are also of the opinion that they lack effective consequences with which to reward excellent performance and adequately address underperformance.

63. Active communication and feedback on performance is not a regular feature of the Organization. Despite clear guidelines from the Office of Human Resources Management regarding staff performance and development roles, managers often do not consider human resource functions to be among their core responsibilities. Managers report that they are not able to oversee performance proactively owing to a lack of time and competing priorities. The importance of continuous feedback has not been adopted or internalized. Given this context, it will be difficult for the new performance management system to evolve fully from human resources policy to human resources practice.

64. Managers and staff further report that performance ratings are "meaningless" because the Secretariat does not attach consequences to performance at either end of the spectrum. Staff and managers believe that career trajectories are independent from performance appraisals. This lack of significance is further evidenced by the frequent unavailability of PAS files during the hiring process. *The Department of Management responded that "as the e-PAS reporting system is developed and Galaxy specifications are drawn up for importing e-PAS information on demand, the process will be greatly simplified for staff".*

65. Though it is widely acknowledged that e-PAS ratings do not have significant career implications, OIOS, nonetheless, observed a persistent, overwhelming organizational focus on them. Though the overwhelming majority of staff ratings fall within the positive categories 1 to 3, performance differentiation often results in staff-manager conflict. To ensure that annual e-PAS ratings are supported by adequate documentation and considered objective, OIOS believes that the attention

of managers needs to be drawn to the relevant instructions on maintaining proper staff performance records throughout the year. This would reduce unnecessary conflict about the rating and focus staff and managers on the constructive qualitative feedback that PAS is intended to provide, thereby facilitating the shift in organizational culture required to achieve performance orientation.

Establishing accountability

66. Despite guidelines from the Office of Human Resources Management for work planning, the e-PAS has no mechanism in place to verify if goals in individual e-PAS files have any relationship to those of a department/office. Even though e-PAS requires staff to confirm that they received a copy of their unit or department work plan, OIOS focus groups revealed that they often check the box without having received the appropriate work plan. This practice undermines the system's ability effectively to hold staff and managers accountable for appropriate selection of performance goals. *The Department of Management responded that "the e-PAS reporting system currently under development will contribute greatly to solving the work plan/no work plan issue".*

67. The current structure of e-PAS puts significant limits on holding staff members with supervisory responsibilities accountable. Beyond indicating the managerial competencies, managers are not required to include goals, related actions or measures of success regarding people management; without such specific actions and objectives, it is difficult to hold programme managers accountable for performance.

Feedback and ongoing communication

68. Though the e-PAS process requires work-planning sessions, a mid-year performance evaluation and discussion, and end-of-cycle reviews, managers and staff indicate that they often "point and click" their way through e-PAS requirements or meet briefly instead of having meaningful discussions of performance expectations. *The Department of Management responded that "the midpoint review workflow is currently being revised. A number of changes have been initiated and the problem articulated in this paragraph will be addressed in this context".*

69. Though PAS provides staff with the opportunity to provide written feedback on the performance of supervisors, OIOS surveys and focus groups revealed that this optional element of the process does not facilitate constructive dialogue or yield changes in supervisor behaviour. Though they may provide comments on supervisor performance via e-PAS, staff report that a response is not elicited from the supervisor or the supervisor's first reporting officer. To avoid the possibility that managers might take offence, staff report that comments on supervisor performance are less candid than they would be otherwise.

E. Career support and staff development

1. Progress and impact of career support and training initiatives

Culture of continuous learning

70. Commitment to continuous learning has been designated as a core competency for staff and the Office of Human Resources Management has clearly outlined indicators that demonstrate this commitment. Staff demonstrate this commitment by:

- Keeping abreast of new developments in one's occupation/profession
- Actively seeking to develop oneself professionally and personally
- Contributing to the learning of colleagues and subordinates
- Showing willingness to learn from others
- Seeking feedback to learn and improve.

Though these points identify behaviours indicative of commitment to continuous learning, no measures exist to measure how broadly Secretariat staff demonstrate such commitment. Staff development targets in Human Resources Action Plans only reflect training enrolment. Nevertheless, staff indicate that the Office of Human Resources Management has successfully created a culture of continuous learning by providing courses and resources designed to build a "more multi-skilled, versatile workforce" in the broadest possible sense. *The Department of Management responded that "the current training database does contain all the training activity information for all participating staff members. It is possible upon request to retrieve an individual staff training activity report for any given period, for instance for the e-PAS cycle".*

Meeting development needs and career aspirations

71. The e-PAS is widely perceived as an effective tool for setting mid-term and annual learning objectives. However, staff and managers indicate dissatisfaction with the overall process of assessing training and development needs. At times, the allocation of training funds on the department/office level is not consistently based on an assessment of individual needs, unit/section/divisional needs or on the career aspirations of staff.

72. The *United Nations Competencies for the Future* booklet achieves the purposes for which it was designed. Considered a best practice tool by human resource executives outside the Organization, the guide supports staff in identifying opportunities and developing skills and competencies for job success.

73. To support junior Professional staff in achieving their career goals, the Office of Human Resources Management established a unique programme for successful national competitive examination applicants. The programme includes special orientation courses, mentoring, and reassignment exercises. The significant decrease in resignations at the P-2 level indicates the positive impact of the programme. However, junior Professionals still express frustration regarding lack of responsibilities at the P-2 level and vague career opportunities. Nonetheless, the high rate of mobility among junior Professionals demonstrates how successfully the

Office has communicated the significance of mobility at this level, as well as its potential to create immediate professional development opportunities.

74. The efforts of the Office of Human Resources Management to provide career opportunities and support have helped the Organization to improve in two areas:

- *Retention of staff members*. Between 1998 and 2003 the number of resignations among staff in all categories decreased from 3.1 per cent to 0.7 per cent; the per cent of resignations among P-2 staff decreased from 5.4 per cent to 2.1 per cent; and the number of resignations among staff under 30 years of age decreased from 23 per cent to 2.5 per cent.[19]
- *Decrease in time-in-grade before promotion*. The number of staff in grade for 0 to 5 years at the time of promotion increased from 32 per cent to 52 per cent from 1998 to 2003.[19]

Training curriculum and evaluation

75. The most significant component of the Office of Human Resources Management career development system is its extensive curriculum of training workshops and seminars. In preparation for the 2007 mobility deadline, the Office used its $2 million budget increase to expand course offerings. The increased training curriculum represents significant progress towards meeting development needs, fulfilling career aspirations and building functional competencies among staff, all of which are especially critical given the 2007 deadline. Current courses are adapted and new courses designed in response to department/office requests and variable organizational factors, such as the mobility policy.

76. The process for evaluating training courses which the Office of Human Resources Management funds is primarily qualitative. In order to monitor the quality of training overall and gauge to what extent it fulfils development needs, supports career aspirations and builds functional, transferable skills, the Office relies primarily upon staff and department/office self-assessments. Training evaluations probe reaction and learning, two dimensions which enable workshop participants to complete evaluations relatively quickly, but fail to establish a measurable link between the training experience, on-the-job behaviour and, most critical to the results-based budgeting model, programme outcomes. *The Department of Management responded that "all programmes are systematically evaluated through a number of means, including staff self-assessment, pre-testing and post-testing of training programmes, evaluation of individual consultants, focus groups and pilot-programmes, etc. In addition, the Office of Human Resources Management periodically commissioned an external evaluation of the staff development programmes. The most recent such evaluation was carried out in the spring of 2004 and covered the staff development activities undertaken in the years 2000-2003".* OIOS was not provided with the recent external evaluation of staff development programmes for the purpose of this study. Furthermore, the response of the Department of Management outlines measures in place to evaluate training programmes overall, while this OIOS finding focuses specifically on the assessment of changes in staff behaviour and programme performance owing to training.

2. Challenges to the success of career support and training

Limited resources

77. Despite a budget increase, the demand for training and career development support continues to exceed Office of Human Resources Management resources. The Office's budget allocation is too limited to cover many of the training requests that departments/offices submit each year. Given the extent of career development initiatives under way and the scope of those to be launched in support of the mobility requirement, the budget shortfall will only continue to increase as 2007 approaches.

Improving structured development opportunities

78. The key to development is not only training, but also job experience. Challenging experiences, skills-stretching opportunities, coaching, feedback and mentoring are important factors in professional development. However, the design of the Organization and the commitment of managers do not currently promote such development. Career paths and positions created to accelerate professional development do not exist in the Organization. Moreover, managers are reluctant to hire promising staff with non-traditional backgrounds. Although the national competitive examination staff programme has successfully rotated P-2s throughout the Organization, the programme only facilitates lateral moves and is limited to the first 24 to 30 months of employment. When national competitive examination staff age out of this programme, the Organization has no specific strategy for developing their careers further.

More rigorous needs assessment

79. Though the Office of Human Resources Management instructions require Executive Offices to administer exit surveys to separating staff, OIOS found no evidence that such surveys have been completed. Without data from exit surveys, neither OIOS nor the Office of Human Resources Management can conclusively determine if separating staff resign owing to an absence of appropriate career paths within the Organization.

80. Because of the immediate demand for continued budget increases, the Office of Human Resources Management must make a more outcome-specific case — at the Secretariat, department/office and individual levels — for training's ability to support organizational advancement. A results-based method for assessing organizational needs must be adopted and a Secretariat-wide skills inventory compiled if the Organization is to maximize the impact of training. *The Department of Management responded that "needs assessment at the department/office level are carried out every year when departments/offices submit their request for funding of upgrading of substantive and information technology skills. In addition, the departments/offices report every year on the impact of the use of these training funds".*

Tracking training participation

81. Though the Office of Human Resources Management and departments/offices report that they monitor the number of staff attending training, the Staff Development Activities report does not accurately reflect the number of staff

members participating each year. For budgetary purposes, the Office tracks the total number of training opportunities in which staff participate vs. the total number of staff who participate overall. As a result, the number of training opportunities reflected in the report is of limited use for planning purposes; the number of individual participants can exceed the total number of staff employed by a given department/office. It is important for managers who want to assess training trends in their departments/offices to have access to more meaningful data.

F. Human resources planning

1. Progress to date and impact in human resources planning

Human Resources Action Plans

82. Since 1999, the Office of Human Resources Management has firmly established Human Resources Action Plans as the main instrument of planning. Heads of Department, the Office and planning personnel convene biannually to discuss progress relative to the previous cycle. Following these meetings, Heads of Department are responsible for achieving human resources targets. The Office of Human Resources Management is developing an online tool that will provide departments/offices with access to regularly updated Human Resources Action Plans targets.

83. The Office of Human Resources Management reported that, during the second human resources planning cycle, the majority of offices/departments demonstrated positive trends in achieving targets. The Office's initiative to provide departments/offices with comparative performance analysis should serve as a further incentive to achieve the goals outlined in action plans. Most departments/offices consider Human Resources Action Plans to be useful monitoring tools; their impact is reduced considerably, however, as they are not often used for planning purposes.

Workforce planning capacity

84. The Office of Human Resources Management modified its organizational structure to incorporate a workforce planning function; the new Planning, Administration and Monitoring Service fulfils this purpose. In addition, the Office's Staffing Service supports development of staffing plans at the organizational and departmental levels. Demographic data on staff composition and organizational trends is now continuously updated online.

2. Challenges to the success of human resources planning

Enhancing Human Resources Action Plans

85. Although Human Resources Action Plans are key to departmental human resources planning, several challenges diminish their effectiveness:

- Insufficient strategic discussions of Action Plan objectives and their implications for department/office planning
- Action Plan data in one of eight management areas is derived through Office of Human Resources Management-Head of Department/Office validation instead of being generated from IMIS and Galaxy databases

- "Action" Plans do not outline customized actions for the Office of Human Resources Management and departments/offices to address areas of need.

86. The periodic discussions between the Office of Human Resources Management and Heads of Departments are often of limited value to department/office human resources planning efforts; in many cases, departments/offices consider the Action Plan reviews to be a compliance exercise and regularly disagree with the Office's calculation of key indices. Discussions focus largely on targets achieved during the last cycle and the accuracy of data used to set those targets; as a result, strategic discussion is frequently overshadowed. OIOS did not observe that the Office is aware of how departments/offices use Action Plan data outside biannual discussions. The lack of strategic discussion and follow-up diminishes the value that Action Plans yield for departments/offices.

87. Some indicators in Human Resources Action Plans, as well as the methodology used to derive them, have significant limitations. The use of different base populations limits the capacity of indicators accurately to reflect human resources management issues of departments/offices. Since the values of some indicators in one key management area rely upon Office of Human Resources Management-department/office verification and are not directly obtained from IMIS, the credibility of centrally stored IMIS data becomes questionable, as are any comparisons of indicators achieved across departments/offices.

88. The utility of action plans is further challenged by the absence of action-oriented steps for departments/offices to address underperformance. The "actions" to be performed by the Office of Human Resources Management are standardized and broad; they do not specify next steps with regard to human resources targets or unique situations within offices/departments.

Improving workforce planning

89. Workforce planning is necessary to ensure that the appropriate staff are in place to accomplish the Organization's goals. Workforce planning entails an assessment of current skills and future needs, as well as projections of age, gender and geography targets. These factors inform staffing and recruitment plans and determine if future organizational needs will be met by recruiting, training and/or rotating staff. Despite the abundance of data in the IMIS and Galaxy databases, the Office of Human Resources Management workforce planning initiative is narrow in scope; it focuses primarily on determining staff needs that will arise when current staff retire.

90. The inadequate planning capacity of the Office of Human Resources Management has been addressed in previous OIOS and Joint Inspection Unit reports. Although the Office has augmented capacity and indicated that the Operational Services Division will increase its emphasis on workforce planning, only one junior staff member in the Office is assigned to the effort full time. Limited staff resources and the need for more collaboration across divisions significantly challenge the Office's ability to develop the robust workforce planning capacity outlined in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform (A/57/293).

IV. Recommendations

91. The Office of Human Resources Management should establish indicators and benchmarks to measure the success of the new staff selection system (MC-04-001-001). *The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

92. The Office of Human Resources Management should support departments/offices in developing internal recruitment plans that specify hiring targets, potential recruitment channels and success indicators, all of which should be linked to Human Resources Action Plans. Throughout the planning process, the Office should identify and disseminate recruiting best practices across the Organization (para. 22) (MC-04-001-002). *The Department of Management responded that "this operational feature is expected to be developed in conjunction with or as a by-product of the revised version of the Human Resources Action Plans". The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

93. The Office of Human Resources Management and departments/offices should systematically engage in proactive and multifaceted recruiting strategies — such as creating links on other relevant web sites, cultivating alliances with universities and professional associations and advertising posts in relevant journals — while continuing to publicize vacancies on Galaxy (para. 22) (MC-04-001-003). *The Department of Management responded that "this will significantly increase both the workload in the Office of Human Resources Management and the Organization's expenditures. Besides, select and very specific vacancies are still advertised in newspapers and magazines, within the traditionally (since well before the introduction of the new staff selection system) limited budget provided by the General Assembly to the Organization." The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.* OIOS believes that free or low-cost options, such as providing Internet links on related web sites exist, and should be further explored by the Office of Human Resources Management.

94. The Office of Human Resources Management should revise the personal history profile to include the option to attach a cover letter of no more than a few paragraphs (para. 22) (MC-04-001-004). *The Department of Management responded that "this recommendation is in the process of being implemented".*

95. The Office of Human Resources Management should ensure that P-3 level generic job profiles emphasize attainable competencies and reasonable qualification requirements in order to facilitate cross-functional mobility (para. 23) (MC-04-001-005). *The Department of Management responded that "[a] review of the sets of generic job profiles already developed was conducted, keeping in mind the fact that the generic job profiles, originally developed as classified jobs whose purpose was to streamline the classification process, were now also the primary source for developing vacancy announcements. The review focused on: (i) ensuring consistency among the qualification requirements for the different functions for which generic job profiles have been developed; (ii) adapting the generic job profiles to the main source used to build vacancy announcements; (iii) and adapting the generic job profiles to the need to promote mobility among occupational groups at the lower professional levels." The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with the recommendation.*

96. Galaxy should contain a link to e-PAS that provides Programme Case Officers with access to candidate work plans and end-of-cycle appraisals (para. 25) (MC-04-001-006). *The Department of Management responded that "this proposal is entirely feasible, but setting up the security system for authorized access will be a major issue". The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

97. The Office of Human Resources Management should clearly underline in the Evaluation and Selection Guidelines for Action by Programme Case Officers and Heads of Department that, whenever feasible, two or more interviewers should interview one candidate or conduct sequential interviews with different interviewers to reduce the risk that the bias of any one individual will prevail (para. 25) (MC-04-001-007). *The Department of Management agreed with the recommendation emphasizing that there is a need to ensure flexibility to accommodate different types of positions in different disciplines.*

98. Departments/offices should develop standards for the composition of interview panels, such as representation from divisions/sections within the department/office, as well as from other departments/offices and agencies of the United Nations system. Adherence to such standards should be monitored by central review bodies (para. 25) (MC-04-001-008). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management has issued guidelines which provide the necessary flexibility in view of the diversity of positions in the Organization. To promote consistency, the Office of Human Resources Management encourages the use of the guidelines and the sharing of information on best practices across departments/offices."*

99. The Office of Human Resources Management should consider using Galaxy for recruiting staff on all contract types (MC-04-001-009). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management is working with various concerned departments on implementing this recommendation".*

100. The Office of Human Resources Management should ensure that competency-based interviews are used to evaluate short-listed candidates. Competency-based interview support tools, such as a template for interview notes which prompts responses along structured dimensions, should be built into Galaxy (para. 10) (MC-04-001-0010). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management supports this recommendation in principle and will explore ways to streamline recording of interview results".*

101. The Office of Human Resources Management should include all material that provides information or evidence for selection decisions in Galaxy (para. 27) (MC-04-001-0011). *The Department of Management responded that "[i]t is not clear what is meant here. Such functionality does exist. Programmes managers, not the Office of Human Resources Management, are entering information or evidence for recommendations of candidates to the central review bodies."* OIOS highlights that the current instructions on staff selection allow documentation relevant to the recruitment process to be recorded outside the Galaxy system. OIOS reiterates the importance of recording all relevant information centrally in one system.

102. Heads of Department should ensure that human resources management and planning is a regular agenda item at senior management and divisional meetings;

they should further ensure that a human resources strategy planning session is conducted within the context of the annual PAS process (para. 17) (MC-04-001-0012). *The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

103. The Office of Human Resources Management should recommend to the General Assembly that they consider shortening the period for submitting applications from 60 to 45 days (para. 29) (MC-04-001-0013). *The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation and the relevant proposal has been made in the report on human resources management reform to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.*

104. The Office of Human Resources Management should recommend to the General Assembly that they consider allowing vacancy announcements to close before the 60-day deadline when a 15 or 30-day candidate has been selected for the post (MC-04-001-0014). *The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

105. The Office of Human Resources Management should give priority to providing central review bodies with detailed guidelines regarding their functions and ensure uniform understanding of such guidelines (paras. 34-35) (MC-04-001-0015). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management is issuing various guidelines to support the selection process, including for central review bodies". The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with the recommendation.*

106. The Office of Human Resources Management should ensure that any additional questions that Programme Case Officers include in vacancy announcements are consistent with the job description or generic job profile of the advertised post (para. 38) (MC-04-001-0016). *The Department of Management agreed with this recommendation.*

107. The Office of Human Resources Management should ensure that Programme Case Officers consistently enter interview results and other applicable evaluation data in Galaxy. Comments should follow a certain structure and contain a minimum amount of specified information (para. 39) (MC-04-001-0017). *The Office of Human Resources Management did not agree with this recommendation.* OIOS reiterates that accurate information on interview results should be made available to central review bodies to ensure that candidates were evaluated on the basis of the pre-approved evaluation criteria and that the applicable procedures were followed.

108. The Office of Human Resources Management should clarify the role of the Central Review Committee in reviewing staff for conversion to permanent status and define the application of committee recommendations. Furthermore, the Central Review Committee should receive information crucial to decision-making, such as e-PAS files (para. 41) (MC-04-001-0018). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management will clarify the role of central review bodies in this respect". The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with the recommendation.*

109. In partnership with departments/offices, the Office of Human Resources Management should conduct assessments of operational requirements in all functional areas, including completion of the skills inventory at the department/office level. It should clearly define how mobility will channel these skills and

competencies to meet operational needs (para. 55) (MC-04-001-0019). *The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

110. The Office of Human Resources Management should set up an Intranet web site containing relevant information for all categories of staff affected by the mobility policy (para. 49) (MC-04-001-0020). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management already implemented this recommendation and the whole information for the mobility campaign in the fall of 2004 will be placed on Intranet. Currently, the inter-agency mobility statement has been placed there."*

111. The Office of Human Resources Management should give priority to implementing occupational networks across the Organization and to ensuring global functioning of roster management in Galaxy (MC-04-001-0021). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management is currently developing a pilot network for staff in the management and administration functions. Building on the experience of this pilot, the Office of Human Resources Management will assist in developing other networks, which will play an increasingly important role in preparing staff for mobility within and across functions in the Organization." The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with the recommendation.*

112. The Office of Human Resources Management should give priority to developing further initiatives that address spouse employment and family issues, especially at duty stations with high vacancy rates (para. 50) (MC-04-001-0022). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management and offices away from Headquarters already started the development and/or implementation of spouse employment and family support programmes". The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

113. The Office of Human Resources Management should prepare a detailed mobility action plan, including (i) clearly defined, measurable objectives, especially with regard to facilitating moves across duty stations; (ii) indicators to track mobility along various dimensions; and (iii) assigned responsibilities and specific timelines linked to action items (para. 52) (MC-04-001-0023). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management has developed an implementation plan leading up to the time of the first expiration of post occupancy limits in 2007 or 2008. The plan envisages several pilot voluntary managed reassignment exercises prior to 2007 ... in order to stimulate greater lateral mobility. A large-scale mobility information campaign, Secretariat-wide, is also scheduled to begin in late 2004 in order to provide information to all staff on the mobility policy ..." The Office of Human Resources Management further explained that "[i]n the larger context of the Human Resources Action Plans, the Office of Human Resources Management is currently preparing a revised format of the Plans for the upcoming planning cycle (2005-2006). Among the proposed revisions, the new format will be: (i) more customized to specific departmental requirements and needs; (ii) more focused on an in-depth tracking of core corporate human resources targets by fine-tuned indicators (e.g. gender, geography, mobility, etc.).* OIOS reiterates the importance of having a clearly defined strategic plan with indicators, benchmarks and timelines for implementing such a ground-breaking change as the new mobility policy Organization-wide.

114. The Office of Human Resources Management should recommend to the General Assembly that they consider further incentives to promote mobility to duty stations with high vacancy rates. Incentives could include:

(a) Reducing the maximum post occupancy period at these duty stations;

(b) Considering candidates who have served three years at a duty station with high vacancy rates at the 15-day mark, even when applying for a post one level higher than the current level (para. 43) (MC-04-001-0024).

The Department of Management responded that "[a]s the mobility policy only came into effect on 1 May 2002, it is too early to expect significant impact until the mobility policy is fully implemented from May 2007 onwards. The Office of Human Resources Management will therefore consider these recommendations in the light of the ongoing implementation of the mobility policy." OIOS agrees that it is too early to put such incentives in place immediately but re-emphasizes the importance of closely monitoring the effect of the mobility policy on the vacancy rate at duty stations with chronically high vacancies to decide whether and when such incentives should be introduced, even before May 2007.

115. The Office of Human Resources Management should develop specific measures to reduce P-2 vacancy rates at duty stations with the highest number of such vacancies (para. 44) (MC-04-001-0025). *The Department of Management responded that "managers have delegated authority to select staff. They select national competitive examination candidates from the rosters. The Office of Human Resources Management will enhance the P-2 vacancy reduction element in the Human Resources Action Plans and will monitor its implementation accordingly." The Office of Human Resources Management did not agree with this recommendation.* OIOS believes that a centrally coordinated effort as part of the managed reassignment of P-2 staff is required to fill vacancies at duty stations with high vacancy rates.

116. The Office of Human Resources Management should extend the period during which P-2 staff are eligible for participation in the Managed Reassignment Programme, while maintaining the opportunity for junior Professionals to participate in the Voluntary Managed Reassignment Programme after 24 months of employment (para. 44) (MC-04-001-0026). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management will study the feasibility of this recommendation".*

117. The Office of Human Resources Management should develop a field for people management actions in the individual work plan section of e-PAS to be completed by all staff in managerial positions. This field should include specific actions related to recruiting, retaining and developing staff (para. 67) (MC-04-001-0029). *The Department of Management responded that "[m]anagerial competencies are already included in the e-PAS and managers are evaluated accordingly. Those managerial competencies include managing performance, building trust and empowering others." The Office of Human Resources Management did not agree with this recommendation.* OIOS re-emphasized that currently "managerial competencies" are captured in a four-point rating scale covering six dimensions, none of which relate to recruitment and retainment of staff, for example. Furthermore, comments on managerial competencies are only required when they are described as "outstanding" or "unsatisfactory".

118. The Office of Human Resources Management should enforce the requirement for mid-term performance evaluations and discussions by requiring the results of these discussions to be entered into a standardized e-PAS field (para. 68) (MC-04-001-0028). *The Department of Management responded that "[t]his functionality already exists: there is a field in the mid-year review part of the e-PAS for managers/staff to record the results of their discussions, as necessary. The PAS already provides for managers to discuss individual staff member career development plans and aspirations during the work plan and performance appraisal meetings, and specific fields to record those exist in the e-PAS." The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with the recommendation.*

119. The Office of Human Resources Management should encourage managerial performance discussions between first and second reporting officers based on the staff comments on supervision received provided in e-PAS. First reporting officers should develop specific people-management/career support goals (in e-PAS) in response to staff comments, if required (para. 69) (MC-04-001-0027). *The Department of Management agreed with the recommendation and responded that the key to improved managerial performance is to achieve a behavioural change based on continued feedback provided by staff and supervisors on managerial skills and competencies.*

120. The Office of Human Resources Management should introduce a feature in e-PAS whereby staff and first reporting officers certify that evaluation discussions took place (para. 68) (MC-04-001-0030). *The Department of Management responded that "[t]here are already two fields where staff members can draw attention to whether evaluation discussions took place: in the self-appraisal part on the comments on supervision received field and in the staff member's comment field after they have received their evaluation and rating from both first and second reporting officers". The Office of Human Resources Management did not agree with this recommendation.* OIOS underlines the importance that both staff members and first reporting officers certify on a mandatory basis that discussions took place. Optional comments would not allow determining whether discussions actually took place.

121. The existing template training plan for departments/offices of the Office of Human Resources Management should be modified to include results-based metrics that link specific programme goals to skills learned through training (para. 76) (MC-04-001-0031). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management will consider ways to better record skills acquired through training, but ... staff development activities are both for current and future functions". The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

122. The Office of Human Resources Management should implement a tracking system that monitors training participating by index number, thereby eliminating the redundancies reflected in the Staff Development Activities report (para. 81) (MC-04-001-0032). *The Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management does not agree that the Staff Development Activities report contains redundancies. The current report shows statistics on participation in all training programmes as well as cumulative data for all training events for a given department/office and is extremely helpful in enabling staff and managers to view global data. In addition to this report, during human resources planning*

meetings, each department receives detailed information on training undertaken by staff in the department broken down by each area of training and by gender and category of staff". OIOS believes that it is important to include data on training undertaken by staff members per department/office in the Staff Development Activities report to allow comparisons and benchmarking across the Secretariat on the number of trainings per staff member per department/office.

123. When completing e-PAS, first reporting officers should be required to include learning and development comments linking specific behaviours to programme results achieved after training (para. 71) (MC-04-001-0033). *The Department of Management responded that "this recommendation could be implemented with the flexibility which is necessary in view of the fact that training may be undertaken for both current and future functions".*

124. Staff members should be required to complete e-PAS self-appraisals linking behaviours and programme goals achieved to training experiences (para. 71) (MC-04-001-0034). *The Department of Management responded that "currently, self-appraisals are optional. Implementation of this recommendation would require staff management consultations."*

125. The Office of Human Resources Management should create mandatory online evaluations for all in-house training (MC-04-001-0035). *The Department of Management responded that "[t]he wide variety of training environments requires different forms of evaluations. While some evaluations are already done online, for instance for all information technology courses, others call for hard copy forms to be filled out, as experience has shown that evaluations are best completed in the immediate aftermath of the training (i.e. before people leave the training venue). In order to allow better recording and reporting, the Office of Human Resources Management is currently developing standardized, scannable evaluation forms for all training events, which will be recorded in a single database." The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

126. The Office of Human Resources Management should immediately enforce instructions regarding the completion of exit surveys. Survey data should inform career management, staff development and recruiting goals for the Office and departments/offices (para. 79) (MC-04-001-0036). *The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

127. The Office of Human Resources Management should expand mentoring resources to serve more staff at all levels (para. 78) (MC-04-001-0037). *The Department of Management responded that the mentoring programme is now covering all incoming junior Professionals. Expanding the programme to all levels would require additional financial and human resources for the management of the programme. The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.* OIOS acknowledges potential resource implications, but also believes that there are several options to institutionalize mentoring in the Organization, including low-cost options, such as establishing mentoring programmes on the level of departments/offices.

128. The Office of Human Resources Management should conduct annual status reviews on progress relative to Human Resources Action Plan targets; it should consistently use such status meetings to determine the impact Action Plans have on department/office capacity to plan strategically (para. 85) (MC-04-001-0038). *The*

Department of Management responded that "the Office of Human Resources Management is improving the format of an annual global Secretariat report on progress made by departments/offices in reaching their Human Resources Action Plan targets". The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.

129. The Office of Human Resources Management should revise Human Resources Action Plans to include a clear set of customized actions to help departments/offices achieve priority targets; the Office should also support departments/offices in developing internal strategies to address priority issues; subsequent Action Plan updates should include an assessment of these actions (para. 88) (MC-04-001-0039). *The Department of Management responded that "[t]his recommendation will be introduced in the coming 2005-2006 planning cycle, including new customized formats for customized Human Resources Action Plans". The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

130. The Office of Human Resources Management should outline a strategy to have a formal workforce planning capacity in place within the biennium 2004-2005 and reallocate resources accordingly (para. 90) (MC-04-001-0040). *The Office of Human Resources Management agreed with this recommendation.*

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] More than 250 staff members and delegates participated in OIOS focus groups and interviews in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Addis Ababa and Nairobi.

[2] See the impact assessment conducted by the Department of Management (A/58/70) and the overview of the series of reports ("Managing for Results in the United Nations System") by the Joint Inspection Unit contained in document JIU/REP/2004/5.

[3] The behavioural interview is based on the premise that the best way to predict future behaviour is to determine and evaluate past behaviour.

[4] Appointment data was compared for 2002 and 2003; representation data was compared for the periods 1998-2001 and October 2002 to April 2004.

[5] Selection decisions were analysed since May 2002; promotion data was compared from 1998 to 2003.

[6] The functioning of central review bodies as the "ultimate guardians of accountability" (A/55/253, annex II) is reviewed in sect. III.B of the present report.

[7] A/59/69, para. 75.

[8] Human Resources Action Plans are discussed in sect. III.F of the present report.

[9] The duration for filling vacancies is counted from the date of assignment to a Programme Case Officer until the Department Head makes the selection decision. OIOS noted that a significant number of selection cases had incomplete documentation of vacancy building and selection processes in Galaxy.

[10] Central Review Boards consider staff appointment and promotion to the P-5 and D-1 levels; Central Review Committees consider staff in the Professional category up to the P-4 level; Central Review Panels consider staff in the General Service and related categories.

[11] See 41st Staff Council, resolution No. 10 of 4 March 2004.

[12] In accordance with sects. 2.2 and 3.2 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2002/6.

[13] The duty stations taken into consideration (Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Beirut, Geneva, Nairobi, New York, Santiago and Vienna) account for 91 per cent of all transfers recorded between 1998 and 2003.

[14] OIOS projections do not take the number of retirements before 31 December 2007 into consideration. Staff from 31 departments/offices in the P-2 to D-2 levels were included in the analysis. Since data on lateral moves within departments/offices has not been consistently collected, OIOS estimated, based on survey data, that 23 per cent of all moves that qualify as mobility under the new policy are lateral moves.

[15] Mobility requires staff members to assume "substantially different responsibilities" or a change of supervisor even if the occupational grouping and the department/office remain the same after a move.

[16] This was already highlighted in a previous OIOS report (A/57/726, para. 33).

[17] The Joint Inspection Unit report contained in document JIU/REP/2004/5 contains an overview of the series of reports on managing for results in the United Nations system. Part III of the series focuses on managing performance and contracts.

[18] Such a monitoring function has already been mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform of August 2002 (A/57/293, para. 54 (a)).

[19] Data is based on resignations recorded in the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) and refers to staff in the GS-5 to GS-7 and P-2 to D-1 categories. With regard to the age groups, the data does not include staff in the General Service category.